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SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

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SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:  
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- [1](#)1. Mideast
- [1](#)2. Pakistan
- [1](#)3. Iraq
- [1](#)4. US-Israel Relations

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Key stories in the media:

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Ha'aretz and The Jerusalem Post reported that the Arab League delegation composed of Egyptian FM Ahmed Ali Abu al-Gheit and Jordanian FM Abdelelah al-Khatib will only arrive in Israel on July 25, due to PM Ehud Olmert's crowded schedule. The Jerusalem Post reported that Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and the Quartet's new envoy to the region, former British PM Tony Blair, are expected to attend next week's Quartet gathering in Cairo. The Jerusalem Post quoted officials in Jerusalem as saying that nothing concerning a Bush visit to Israel has been confirmed.

Israel Radio quoted State Department Spokesman Sean McCormack as saying on Tuesday: "Anything that President Abbas proposes with regard to maintaining law and order, I think people have to take a look at it. I'm not sure that you're going to find too many forces willing to go into what I expect is a non-permissive environment. The focus should be on building up functioning, capable, responsible Palestinian security forces that are capable of functioning in both areas. Now, I know that right now that's a difficult proposition with respect to the Gaza, but that's really where the main weight of our focus is and the main weight of our effort." McCormack was responding to Mahmoud Abbas's proposal that international forces be sent to the Gaza Strip.

Leading media reported that on Tuesday Palestinian militants fired at least 11 mortar shells toward Israel from the Gaza Strip. No one was injured, but two structures near the Kerem Shalom border crossing sustained damage, and the IDF closed the crossing down. An anti-tank missile was also fired at IDF troops on the Gaza border, but no one was hurt. Hamas targeted the crossing apparently because of Israel's intention to make it the main entry point into Gaza. This morning Israel Radio reported that Israel is sending to the Gaza Strip dozens of truckloads of agricultural produce. Makor Rishon-Hatsofe reported that on Tuesday the Palestinian government headed by deposed PM Ismail Haniyeh asked Israel to start direct talks with Israel on opening the crossings.

The Jerusalem Post reported that the latest IDF assessment predicts that war with Syria could erupt if PM Olmert does not begin peace negotiations with Damascus and that such a conflict would be "at least 10 times worse" than last summer's conflict with Hizbullah. The Jerusalem Post and other media quoted Syrian MP Muhammad Habash as saying that Syria has rejected PM Olmert's offer of peace talks with President Bashar Assad. Speaking on IDF Radio, Internal Security Minister Avi Dichter said that Olmert's offer was "genuine and real." But he was not optimistic that Assad would agree. Maariv reported that in an interview published this week in The New York Sun, an unnamed Syrian Ba'ath official threatened Israel with attacks against Golan settlements if Israel does not evacuate the Golan Heights by September. The official was quoted as saying that Syria "learned from the Hezbollah experience last summer and we can have hundreds of missiles hitting Tel Aviv that will overwhelm Israel's anti-missile batteries." He was further quoted as saying that Syria has "proof" that Israel is also readying for a war.

The Jerusalem Post reported that IDF Intelligence (MI) is also identifying and pinpointing targets for the IDF in the event that a strike is launched against Iran's nuclear facilities. Major media cited MI's assessment that Iran might obtain a nuclear bomb by 2009, although it is more likely to succeed in its endeavors in 2010 or 2011. Hamodi'a reported that the US has dispatched the aircraft carrier USS Enterprise to the Persian Gulf. Maariv reported that an interview published with Italian PM Romano Prodi, in which he said that Israel should be guaranteed that there will be no Iranian military program, caused angry responses in Tehran and almost produced a diplomatic crisis between Italy and Iran.

Ha'aretz reported that the UN has transmitted messages to Israel in recent weeks that the organization's mapping experts have determined that the controversial Sheba Farms on Mount Dov near the Lebanese border, now controlled by Israel, is Lebanese territory. The UN, which has communicated to Israel that the disposition of the Sheba Farms should be dealt with as soon as possible, has proposed to senior government officials that Israel withdraw from the area and that it be considered international territory to be controlled by UNIFIL. Ha'aretz noted that FM Tzipi Livni and PM Olmert oppose the idea. Ha'aretz quoted GOI officials in Jerusalem as saying that the

UN cartographer handling the matter in recent months has determined that the area is indeed Lebanese. The officials added that Syria and Lebanon also agree that the area is Lebanese. Therefore, the UN has said there is no reason for Israel not to relinquish control over the area. Ha'aretz said that GOI officials are treating the matter with kid gloves out of concern that a public statement by the UN could lead to renewed conflict in the North. The daily also noted that the US and France want the Sheba Farms to return to Lebanon.

The Jerusalem Post reported that Mahmoud Abbas has come under heavy criticism from Palestinians -- including drafters of the PA's Basic Law -- who say he is forging a "military dictatorship" in the West Bank by granting military courts broad powers to crack down on civilians. Abbas is also under attack for seeking to dilute the power of the Palestinian Legislative Council, whose members were elected in January 2006.

Ha'aretz and Israel Radio reported that the Waqf Muslim religious trust is digging a ditch in the Old City of Jerusalem, from the northern side of the Temple Mount compound to the Dome of the Rock as a prelude to infrastructure work in the area, generating protests from archaeologists. Ha'aretz also reported that the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA) told the High Court of Justice that it was prepared to allow construction of the Museum of Tolerance on the site of an ancient Muslim cemetery in Jerusalem's Mamila area, although an enormous archaeologist had determined that the excavation was far from complete.

Martin Scheinin of Finland, Special Rapporteur for the UN Human Rights Council, was quoted as saying in an interview with The Jerusalem Post on Tuesday that the council has been a huge disappointment, as it singled out Israel. Scheinin also criticized Israel over its security fence and targeted killings.

Ha'aretz reported that on Monday Vice Premier Haim Ramon and Transportation Minister Shaul Mofaz called for the building of a fence along the southern border to prevent illegal entries via Egypt. Mofaz was quoted as saying that a fence would also reduce drug smuggling and trafficking in women.

The Jerusalem Post reported in-depth on the Fourth of July reception at the US Ambassador's residence. The newspaper reported that DCM Gene Cretz, the master of ceremonies at the celebration, will be winding his tour of duty next month.

Ha'aretz and Yediot reported that the stocks on Tel Aviv's financial markets represent one of the best investments in the world; since the start of the Second Lebanon War they have risen by 40 percent.

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11. Mideast:  
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Summary:  
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Prominent liberal author A. B. Yehoshua wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "Weaknesses and failures are not necessarily moral flaws -- just as victories and achievements are not proof of a moral advantage."

Senior columnist Moshe Ishon wrote in the nationalist, Orthodox Makor Rishon-Hatzofe: "[Tzipi Livni's peace plans] cannot be implemented in reality. It turns out that the minister in charge of foreign affairs is hovering in the air."

Block Quotes:  
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11. "A Year Since Operation Peace for Galilee"

Prominent liberal author A. B. Yehoshua wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (7/11): "A year ago, on July 12, from the international border, Hizbullah -- a Lebanese military organization that advocates the destruction of Israel -- launched an attack on Israel, killed eight soldiers, took two prisoners, and directed rocket fire at the northern communities. We will not repeat what happened a year ago, since the events are

well-known. Israel's strong response to the offensive was morally right, and it was so perceived by most of the world, including parts of the Arab world. True, the war, despite its justification, lasted longer than it should have and revealed many weaknesses, both in the army and in the defense of the home front, but weaknesses and failures are not necessarily moral flaws -- just as victories and achievements are not proof of a moral advantage. In complete contrast to its older and bloodier sister, this war, which we still call the Second Lebanon War, was actually Operation Peace for Galilee. It recaptures the original name of the first Lebanon War, which was staged with blood and destruction by the Begin-Sharon government. Will there be peace for the Galilee in the future? I do not know. If this war, the anniversary of which we are now marking, will become not only a punching bag and source for recriminations, but also a long list of urgent actions that need to be taken, in repairing the army, in fortifying the northern communities and in stabilizing the Security Council agreement on the international border, and mainly in a bold peace initiative with Syria -- then there is a real chance that there will indeed be peace in the future for northern Israel, which is much larger than we think -- from [the northern Galilee] to the outskirts of Tel Aviv."

## II. "A Foreign Minister Disconnected From Reality"

Senior columnist Moshe Ishon wrote in the nationalist, Orthodox Makor Rishon-Hatzofe (7/11): "It is worth mentioning that it is not only the national camp [i.e. the Right] that does not believe in a peace arrangement in a foreseeable time -- but also the liberal camp and part of the Left. Our generation is not prepared for peace.... But our Foreign Minister, who has recently been talking about peace with the Palestinians, is not aware of that. She still believes in progress in peace talks. Meanwhile, her peace plans 'lie in peace' on the pages of newspapers and the Foreign Ministry's protocols. But they cannot be implemented in reality. It turns out that the minister in charge of foreign affairs is hovering in the air."

### 12. Pakistan:

#### Summary:

Dr. Itzik Kfir, an expert on terror in the developing world at the Interdisciplinary Center Herzliya, wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "The civilian/military Pakistani administration does not want to see bin-Ladin clutch the red button.... But there can be no doubt that the rise of Islamic extremism to power would increase Pakistani terrorist activity in India -- especially in Kashmir."

#### Block Quotes:

"Will Extremists Control the Islamic Atom Bomb?"

Dr. Itzik Kfir, an expert on terror in the developing world at the

Interdisciplinary Center Herzliya, wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (7/11): "Despite the bloodshed, the 'Red Mosque' crisis will eventually end in a compromise. Some rebel leaders will be jailed, but will be released after one or two years.

It would be more difficult to predict the results of the elections. The civilian/military Pakistani administration does not want to see bin-Ladin clutch the red button. Even the Islamist parties do not want this. But there can be no doubt that the rise of Islamic extremism to power would increase Pakistani terrorist activity in India -- especially in Kashmir."

### 13. Iraq:

#### Summary:

Michael Freund, who was an assistant to former prime minister Binyamin Netanyahu, wrote in the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post: "As Israel's experiences with withdrawal over the past decade have made clear, retreat in the face of terror is simply not an option, and one can only hope that this lesson will not be lost on the powers that be in Washington."

Block Quotes:

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"America, Stay the Course in Iraq"

Michael Freund, who was an assistant to former prime minister Binyamin Netanyahu, wrote in the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post (7/11): "Before the decision-makers in Washington hastily embrace retreat, they might want to take a step back and consider just how detrimental, demoralizing and even destructive withdrawal can be. For proof, they need only look to Israel's recent experience in this regard. Twice in the past seven years the Jewish state has turned tail and fled, pulling its forces out of Lebanon in 2000 and Gaza in 2005. Tired of fighting a determined foe, successive Israeli governments decided to throw in the towel and hope for the best. In both instances, Israel's retreat was carried out in a rapid and precipitous manner, with little thought given to the day after. The result, of course, was nothing short of disastrous.... The fact is that what happens in Iraq matters. Not just in Baghdad, but in Teheran, Pyongyang and in Gaza City too. A weakened America means a strengthened foe, one even more determined to press forward with attacking Israel and the West. As Israel's experiences with withdrawal over the past decade have made clear, retreat in the face of terror is simply not an option, and one can only hope that this lesson will not be lost on the powers that be in Washington. For in the tinderbox that is the Middle East, an American pullout from Iraq might just be the spark that will lead to an even greater conflagration."

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14. US-Israel Relations:

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Summary:

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Washington correspondent Shmuel Rosner wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "There is as degree of difficulty in planning a joint future for Israel and American Jews without first working out the reciprocal relationship."

Block Quotes:

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"Where Is the Center of the Jewish People?"

Washington correspondent Shmuel Rosner wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (7/11): "There is as degree of difficulty in planning a joint future for Israel and American Jews without first working out the reciprocal relationship. Zionist Israel will find it difficult to accept the status of a B team.... In any case, the requirement is to shape a partnership of a new sort. This is a worthy, complex challenge for those planning the future of the Jewish people. Otherwise, as in the old joke about the Jew and his two synagogues, the reality will draw the future: One place will be for living and the other for not setting foot."

JONES